



Working for the Community in Rotherfield, Mark Cross,
Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 16th APRIL 2020 AT 19:30**

As permitted by the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 this meeting was conducted "online" with Councillors participating via Microsoft Teams

Cllr L Henrick (Vice Chair)
Cllr L Buck (part)
Cllr D Hiles
Cllr G Watson-Smith

Cllr P Kember
Cllr J Kitchenham
Cllr A Martin

Cllr J Richardson
Cllr N Wickenden
Cllr A Moore

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

Cllr N Glynn.

ALSO ATTENDING

Trevor Thorpe, Parish Clerk and Adam Hardy, Council Administrator.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (LGA 1972 s 85).

Cllr Rignall had submitted an apology for this meeting. It was **RESOLVED** that this absence be accepted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL, PREJUDICIAL AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA, AND UPDATES TO MEMBERS' REGISTER OF INTERESTS.

Section 10 (2) c (vi) of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct provides dispensation regarding Councillors setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

3. PUBLIC FORUM.

None

4. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF 11TH DECEMBER 2019 & MATTERS ARISING.

Draft Minutes had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be adopted as a true record and they will be signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising from these minutes.

5. TO CONSIDER INFORMATION AND MAKE DECISIONS ON ACTIONS AND EXPENDITURE AS REQUIRED REGARDING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

a) Approval of draft accounts for Financial Year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

The Clerk reported that he is continuing to work on the end of year accounts and complete the bank reconciliation. It was agreed that this item would be carried over to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

CLERK to add an item to the 30th April Parish Council Meeting agenda.

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Tel: 01892 664245. Email: Clerk@rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk

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Cllr Henrick reported that she had been through the accounts and identified some payment allocations that needed clarification, she would send these to the clerk for further investigation and action. It was agreed that each committee chair would be responsible for checking their budget for the financial year and communicate any queries to the Clerk.

Cllr Henrick suggested that moving forward it would be helpful if the Clerk could produce a monthly nominal ledger report for presentation at each Parish Council Meeting.

CLERK to produce a monthly nominal ledger report.

The Clerk confirmed to the Council that due to the Covid-19 crisis the audit process had been pushed back, giving councils more time to complete their end of year accounts. However, his intention is to present the accounts at the April Parish Council Meeting.

b) Agreement of adjustments required to the 2020/21 Budget.

As the end of year report had not been run it was agreed to hold this item over until the next meeting.

CLERK to add an item to the 30th April Parish Council meeting agenda.

c) Review of Council cash balances and allocation of reserves.

The Clerk presented the summary of balances and allocation of reserves. He confirmed that the Council now had five accounts set up. The newest Barclays account has been set up to deal with financial matters relating to Rotherfield Surgery and the practice is now getting sorted in ensuring invoices are forwarded to us. The cumulative amount of the finances at end of year stand at £161,997.17.

The Clerk had contacted Wealden District Council and had to report that there are no Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments due to us for this half year. The Clerk had attempted to do a predictive calculation but there are too many variables to get an accurate predicted amount.

It was agreed that this item should be looked at again when the end of year accounts for 2019/20 had been finalised.

CLERK to add item to the 30th April Parish Council Meeting agenda.

Cllr Buck left the meeting at this point to attend a meeting of the Parish Pals.

d) Review of Asset Register and any changes required to insurance policy cover.

The Asset Register had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Cllr Henrick enquired why the Village Hall was not listed along with the other property that is the ownership of the Council. The Clerk will investigate and report back to the Council.

CLERK to investigate and add the Village Hall to the asset register of the Council.

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The Clerk reported that the insurance renewal for the Parish Council had been received and he would go through this before the April Parish Council Meeting.

e) Review of Financial Regulations and this Committee's Terms of Reference.

The Terms of Reference had been circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting. Some typographical errors had been identified and the Communications Committee needed to be added to Membership but otherwise no other changes were felt necessary. With these minor amendments it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Terms of Reference for this committee for a further year.

The Financial Regulation had been circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting. No comments or changes were identified. It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Finance Regulations for a further year.

f) Review/approve list of grants for payment at the April 2020 Council meeting.

A list of grants paid in 2019/20 & 2018/19 were circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting.

Cllr Henrick reported that Rotherfield St Martins (RSM) have approached us as they have no income, due to the Covid-19 crisis, and they are concerned about their short-term position.

Cllr Hiles declared an interest and confirmed he would abstain from any vote relating to grants as his wife is an employee of RSM.

Rotherfield Memorial Hall have very kindly suspended RSM's rent for three months. The Parish Council usually give RSM a support grant of £1,000 in two instalments and a suggestion has been made to pay the whole grant for this financial year at the end of April. Cllr Kember suggested increasing the grant and proposed an immediate payment of £1,500 with a further £500 to be paid later in the year.

It was **RESOLVED** to increase the grant payments to Rotherfield St Martins and make an immediate payment of £1,500 at the end of April.

Cllr Martin proposed that the Emergency Coronavirus fund made to RSM not be recovered following the crisis.

It was **RESOLVED** to formalise the emergency fund of £500, given to RSM under delegated powers, as a full grant and not seek to recover the amount given.

Suggestions for additional beneficiaries were discussed and the following grants for the 2020/21 financial year were agreed.

Cllr Henrick declared an interest as the Treasurer of the Horticultural Society.

Recipient Details	Payment Date	Amount
RSM Support grant instalment one	April	£1,500.00
Wealden Citizens Advice Bureau	April	£300.00
Samaritans	April	£200.00
Rotherfield Friendship Club	April	£200.00

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Kent & Sussex Air Ambulance	April	£250.00
League of Friends Surgery Coffee Morning Costs Grant	April	£100.00
Pre-School Annual Support Grant	April	£750.00
RSM Support grant instalment two	December	£500.00
Bonfire Society Support Grant – Christmas Lunch	December	£500.00
Hospice in the Weald	April	£250.00
Crowborough First Responders	April	£100.00
Rotherfield Horticultural Society	April	£120.00
	Total	£4,770.00

It was **RESOLVED** to approve this list of grants for payment.

Cllr Martin suggested that the grants policy should be reviewed at a future Parish Council Meeting.

CLERK to agenda grant policy review at a future meeting of the Parish Council.

Cllr Hiles suggested that in the future we should consider index linking grants so that the amount given to beneficiaries increases in line with costs.

g) Review accounting software, account headings and categories used.

It was agreed that it was an admin task for each Committee chair to check their budgets and cost codes once the end of year accounts have been completed.

h) Receive the Smith & Fermor charity annual accounts and report.

The annual accounts and report had been circulated to Councillors prior to this meeting. The Clerk presented the accounts to the council and reported that there had been a total of eight support grants made this year. Current assets stand at: £4,113.87

i) Resolution to continue using “online” payments to suppliers.

The Clerk reported that the council’s financial regulations require that “at least every two years” approval of the direct debit and BACS or CHAPS for either bill payments shall be approved by resolution of council. Currently the only direct debits are those paid on behalf of the Surgery for electricity and gas, it is hoped to add the monthly waste collection bill to the list.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the use of direct debit and BACS or Chaps payments for the payment of bills.

j) Response to “Parish Pals” request to consider GDPR Implications of their work.

The Chair of meeting gave approval for this item to be taken first. Cllr Henrick outlined the work that had taken place following the request from Parish Pals for the council to cover them for their GDPR responsibilities. Following consultations and investigations by Cllr Henrick, the Clerk and the Council Administrator, a letter was sent to the Parish Pals the findings of which are summarised below:

- Cllr Henrick had consulted with Cllr Phil Dixon (Wealden District Council).
- Council Administrator had contacted the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) & National Charities & Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Knowledgebase.
- Clerk had contacted Crowborough Town Council and sought guidance from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

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- It was our conclusion that the work of Parish Pals could continue without any risk of GDPR repercussions and that it is legally compliant in its current setup. The only condition that they must adhere to is a publicised commitment to destroy all personal data once this crisis has passed.
- The ICO are not pursuing any voluntary organisations for compliance during this national emergency and the creation of the new database would not require any GDPR policies or processes to be put in place; although, it is good practice to maintain a record of who has access to what data.

Following receipt of the council's letter, Cllr Henrick reported that a telephone response had been received enquiring why it would not be possible to set the Parish Pals up in a similar fashion to other council working parties. It was explained that becoming a working party or sub-committee of the Parish Council would require greater oversight and accountability with councillor representation on the Parish Pals committee.

Cllr. Henrick reported that the Parish Pals had met and decided that with the Council's reassurance they felt they were able to continue in their current format and would not be approaching the council to become a Working Party or Sub-Committee.

Cllr Buck reported that she believes Crowborough Town Council had supported their community groups with printing and advertising. Cllr Henrick confirmed that the council had paid for the printing of the Parish Pals flier that was sent out with the Parish Council newsletter.

The Clerk reported that the £500 emergency fund for RSM had been gratefully received as well as card readers for RSM which would be paid for by a grant from Wealden District Council.

Cllr Henrick commended Parish Pals and Rotherfield St Martins for their continued efforts during this crisis.

It was **RESOLVED** to continue to support Parish Pals and Rotherfield St Martins through the coronavirus situation.

k) Maintenance work required at Rotherfield Surgery.

The Chair of the meeting gave approval for this item to be taken second. Cllr Henrick explained that Rotherfield Surgery had approached the Council about some changes to the structure of building to allow them to deal with patients who might present at the surgery with suspected Covid-19 symptoms. However, since the request the Surgery had decided to make alternative arrangements which do not require structural changes to the building. They may come back to the council and request financial help with their planned changes.

Cllr Henrick had also received a quotation to repair and reupholster the benches in the surgery waiting room. The quotation had been provided by TransFunk Furniture, who had recently reupholstered The Brook Surgery benches, for £1,189.50.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the TransFunk Furniture quote.

CLERK to contact the contractor/Rotherfield Surgery and advise them to proceed with the work.

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Cllr Wickenden reported that the roof bonnets need refurbishing on each corner. It was agreed that Councillors Watson-Smith & Wickenden would investigate and carry out repairs.

6. URGENT ISSUES FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA.

- Cllr Kember asked about the format of the Annual Parish Meeting. Cllr Moore explained that the annual parish meeting scheduled for May had been postponed. An item had been placed on the agenda for the July meeting of the Communications & Social Media Committee with an aim to holding the meeting in September or October.

7. TO RECEIVE DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

- Tuesday 21st April Planning & Building Committee Meeting
- Thursday 30th April Parish Council Meeting

Meeting Closed: 21:25

**Adopted as a true record at the 30th April 2020 meeting of the Parish Council.
The minutes will be signed when circumstances allow.**

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